

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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July 27, 2011

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Presidential Proclamation on Americans with Disabilities Act

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT, 2011

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Generations of Americans with disabilities have improved our country in countless ways. Refusing to accept the world as it was, they have torn down the barriers that prohibited them from fully realizing the American dream. Their tireless efforts led to the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), one of the most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation in our Nation's history. On this day, we celebrate the 21st anniversary of the ADA and the progress we have made, and we reaffirm our commitment to ensure equal opportunity for all Americans.

Each day, people living with disabilities make immeasurable contributions to the diversity and vitality of our communities. Nearly one in five Americans lives with a disability. They are our family members and friends, neighbors and colleagues, and business and civic leaders. Since the passing of the ADA, persons with disabilities are leading fuller lives in neighborhoods that are more accessible and have greater access to new technologies. In our classrooms, young people with disabilities now enjoy the same educational opportunities as their peers and are gaining the tools necessary to reach their greatest potential.

Despite these advancements, there is more work to be done, and my Administration remains committed to ending all forms of discrimination and upholding the rights of Americans with disabilities. The Department of Justice continues to strengthen enforcement of the ADA by ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to community-based services that allow them to lead independent lives in the communities of their choosing. Under provisions of the Affordable Care Act, insurers will no longer be able to engage in the discriminatory practice of denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions, and Americans with disabilities will have greater control over their health care choices. And last year, I signed an Executive Order establishing the Federal Government as a model employer for individuals with disabilities, placing a special focus on recruitment and retention of public servants with disabilities across Federal agencies.

Through the ADA, America was the first country in the world to comprehensively declare equality for citizens with disabilities. To continue promoting these principles, we have joined in signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At its core, this Convention promotes equality. It seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights and opportunities as all people, and are able to lead their lives as do other individuals.

Eventual ratification of this Convention would represent another important step in our forty-plus years of protecting disability rights. It would offer us a platform to encourage other countries to join and implement the Convention. Broad implementation would mean greater protections and benefits abroad for millions of Americans with disabilities, including our veterans, who travel, conduct business, study, reside, or retire overseas. In encouraging other countries to join and implement the Convention, we also could help level the playing field to the benefit of American companies, who already meet high standards under United States domestic law. Improved disabilities standards abroad would also afford American businesses increased opportunities to export innovative products and technologies, stimulating job creation at home.

Equal access, equal opportunity, and the freedom to make of our lives what we will are principles upon which our Nation was founded, and they continue to guide our efforts to perfect our Union. Together, we can ensure our country is not deprived of the full talents and contributions of the approximately 54 million Americans living with disabilities, and we will move forward with the work of providing pathways to opportunity to all of our people.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Tuesday, July 26, 2011, the Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I encourage Americans across our Nation to celebrate the 21st anniversary of this civil rights law and the many contributions of individuals with disabilities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

President Obama Urges Congress to Raise Debt Limit, Find “Paths Forward”

By Bridget Hunter | Staff Writer

Washington — Citing the principles of open debate and fair compromise on which the nation was founded, President Obama briefed the American people on the need to increase the current U.S. debt limit and called for Congress to act quickly.

Weeks of negotiations between the White House and congressional leaders have failed to achieve an agreement. There is consensus that raising the legal debt ceiling should be tied to a broader strategy to better manage the nation’s finances, but debate continues on specific steps to do so. Republican Party leaders are urging deep spending cuts, while Democrats counter that additional revenue is needed to move the nation closer to a balanced budget.

The president, in a July 25 televised address, said bipartisan action is needed to break the impasse. “Because neither party is blameless for the decisions that led to this problem, both parties have a responsibility to solve it,” he said, adding, “Congress now has one week left to act, and there are still paths forward.”

Action is needed to prevent the United States from defaulting on its loans and to protect the excellent credit ratings it currently enjoys — ratings that allow the country to borrow at the best possible interest rates. Many financial experts predict a U.S. default would have adverse effects on the global economy, and congressional leaders say that is something they wish to avoid.

“So the debate right now isn’t about whether we need to make tough choices,” Obama said. “Democrats and Republicans agree on the amount of deficit reduction we need. The debate is about how it should be done.”

In the U.S. system of democracy, the executive branch — headed by the president — is responsible for conducting the financial affairs of the nation, but only Congress, the legislative branch, can levy taxes and authorize spending. The debt ceiling can only be increased by an act of Congress that then must be signed by the president, an example of the checks and balances deliberately established at the nation’s founding to ensure that power is not concentrated in one branch of government.

“America, after all, has always been a grand experiment in compromise,” Obama said in his address. “As a democracy made up of every race and religion, where every belief and point of view is welcomed, we have put to the test time and again the proposition at the heart of our founding: that out of many, we are one. We’ve engaged in fierce and passionate debates about the issues

of the day, but from slavery to war, from civil liberties to questions of economic justice, we have tried to live by the words that Jefferson once wrote: ‘Every man cannot have his way in all things — without this mutual disposition, we are disjointed individuals, but not a society.’”

Obama explained that “raising the debt ceiling does not allow Congress to spend more money. It simply gives our country the ability to pay the bills that Congress has already racked up.”

Defaulting on those obligations would be “a reckless and irresponsible outcome,” he said, and he urged Congress to work harder to hammer out a compromise. “The American people may have voted for divided government, but they didn’t vote for a dysfunctional government.”

In the United States, a divided government occurs when different political parties have control of portions of the federal government. The Democratic Party currently controls the White House and the Senate, but Republicans hold a majority in the House of Representatives.

Since 1960, Congress has acted 78 times to permanently raise, temporarily extend or revise the debt limit — 49 times under Republican presidents and 29 times under Democratic presidents, according to the Department of the Treasury.

The United States reached its debt limit on May 16, but the Treasury Department took a series of steps to extend temporarily its ability to meet the nation’s financial obligations. The last of those measures, suspending reinvestment of the Government Securities Investment Fund, was taken July 15. The nation’s borrowing authority will be expended August 2, according to the Treasury.

“This is no way to run the greatest country on Earth,” Obama said. “So let’s seize this moment to show ... we can still keep our word and meet our obligations ... we can still come together as one nation.”

Joint Statement of Second Indonesia-U.S. Joint Commission Meeting

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson
July 26, 2011

MEDIA NOTE

Joint Statement of the Second Indonesia-U.S. Joint Commission Meeting

Bali, Indonesia

Following is the text of a joint statement by the United States and Indonesia issued on July 26, 2011, following the second Indonesia-U.S. Joint Commission Meeting in Bali, Indonesia:

BEGIN TEXT:

Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr. R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met in Bali on July 24, 2011 to co-chair the second meeting of the U.S.-Indonesia Joint Commission under the bilateral Comprehensive Partnership. Both were accompanied by senior officials from their respective governments.

The Joint Commission is the principal vehicle to implement the Comprehensive Partnership launched by Presidents Yudhoyono and Obama in November 2010 in Indonesia. The first Joint Commission Meeting was held in Washington, D.C. in September 2010.

Foreign Minister Natalegawa and Secretary of State Clinton were delighted to see the steady progress of the Joint Commission, whose members had collaborated with enthusiasm and a constructive spirit reflecting the elevated status of bilateral relations under the Comprehensive Partnership.

Foreign Minister Natalegawa and Secretary Clinton engaged in an extensive dialogue on bilateral, regional, and global issues. They highlighted President Obama's November 2010 visit to Jakarta and his upcoming trip to Bali in November 2011 and pledged to continue to strengthen the U.S.-Indonesian high-level strategic dialogue on global and regional developments. Given Indonesia's chairmanship in 2011 of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the entry of the United States into the East Asian Summit (EAS), and both countries membership in the G-20, Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Natalegawa acknowledged the great importance of this enhanced consultation. They also expressed strong support for the intensive efforts to conclude a Millennium Challenge Corporation compact, likely to total \$600 million over five years, which is in the final stages of development.

The two ministers noted that the Joint Commission and its Working Groups are, in the spirit of equal partnership, promoting close dialogue and cooperation in overcoming shared challenges. Participants in today's Joint Commission session welcomed substantial progress over the past year under the three pillars of the Comprehensive Partnership Plan of Action covering political and security cooperation; economic and development cooperation; and cooperation in socio-cultural, educational, science and technology affairs.

The two Ministers reviewed strategies and highlighted policy initiatives and priorities developed by the six Joint Commission Working Groups in the areas of Democracy and Civil Society, Education, Climate and Environment, Trade and Investment, Security, and Energy.

Working Group on Democracy and Civil Society

The co-chairs of the Working Group on Democracy and Civil Society shared with Foreign Minister Natalegawa and Secretary Clinton the results of bilateral initiatives on cooperation with civil society engagement, civic education, and the upcoming bilateral media dialogue. They agreed to cooperate on democracy and human rights initiatives in international fora including the UN Human Rights Council, and on building democracy through bilateral programs. The United States participated in the third Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) as an observer and will take part in the upcoming fourth BDF, while the National Democratic Institute (NDI) supported the BDF implementing agency, the Institute for Peace and Democracy. The co-chairs expressed a desire to focus in the coming year on cooperation related to open government partnership, human rights, interfaith initiatives, local elections, and participation by women in politics. They will strive to increase youth participation in all of these areas.

Working Group on Education

The co-chairs of the Working Group on Education reported significant progress and new initiatives under the five-year Higher Education Partnership. They described the two countries' support for increased exchange of students and scholars, including through the expanded binational Fulbright Program and with the Department of State's community college initiative, as well as the development of new university partnerships through the U.S. Agency for International Development to strengthen educational capacity, especially in the fields of science and technology. They highlighted the growth of the Peace Corps' English Teaching and Teacher Training program. They also welcomed Indonesian support for 100 Darmasiswa scholarships for Americans and Joint Fulbright-Dikti Scholarships for Master's and PhD degree programs in the United States. They noted expanded support for English and Indonesian language learning to further strengthen collaboration and mutual understanding, and continued support for improved basic education services to facilitate more Indonesian students' ability to continue onto higher education. The Working Group also highlighted the Spring 2011 American-Indonesian Educational Foundation EducationUSA and Access America Education Fairs, in which over 100 U.S. colleges and universities participated, and announced an Indonesia-U.S. Higher Education Summit to be held in Washington, D.C. on October 31, 2011 to further engage

the higher education and private sector communities in both countries. In addition, they acknowledged the existing academic recharging, "twinning," and other post graduate programs funded by the Government of Indonesia.

Working Group on Climate and Environment

The co-chairs of the Working Group on Climate and Environment reported on accomplishments in priority areas, including intensified consultations on global climate change action, tropical forests, environmental management and governance, and biodiversity and ecosystems conservation. Noting Indonesia's July 12, 2011 land tenure speech as a major step forward for forest-dependent communities and recognizing the importance of an accurate forest mapping system, the Working Group identified key challenges and action plans to pilot Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation- Plus (REDD+) programs; strengthen climate change measurement, reporting and verification systems; advance the establishment of the climate change center, protect biodiversity, including habitats that are critical to the survival of orangutans and tigers; combat illegal logging; and promote sustainable management of forest and marine ecosystems. The Working Group also recognized an important new agreement between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Ministry of Environment to expand environmental cooperation and launch the "Breathe Easy, Jakarta" partnership. The two sides also expressed strong support for collaborating in a new Tropical Forest Conservation Act program expected to total approximately \$20 million to manage tropical forests.

Working Group on Trade and Investment

The co-chairs noted preparation for upcoming meetings of the Trade and Investment Council (TIC) and efforts to intensify engagement in the coming year. Bilateral trade figures reached \$23.4 billion in 2010 compared to \$18.0 billion in 2009. Indonesia reported that the United States has become the third largest source of investment in Indonesia, with investment reaching \$930.9 million in 2010. During the first half of 2011, U.S. investment to Indonesia surpassed \$936.1 million. Working Group co-chairs outlined recent commercial engagement successes such as the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) investment conference and U.S. agriculture and education trade missions earlier this year. As well, the co-chairs announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Indonesia's Ministry of Agriculture are leading a temporary task force, to include participation from government, universities, and the private sector, to explore opportunities for cooperative engagement regarding the development of agriculture research, education, market access, and food security and use of

innovative technologies in agriculture. In addition, they recognized growing cooperation on entrepreneurship including a recent U.S. entrepreneurship delegation to Indonesia and Indonesia's hosting of the ASEAN Regional Entrepreneurship Summit. They welcomed the preliminary meeting of the Commercial Dialogue between the two countries held in Washington, D.C. on July 14, 2011 as an initiative to strengthen the existing Working Group on Trade and Investment under the Joint Commission. These initiatives will create a foundation for further increases in our bilateral trade.

Working Group on Security

The co-chairs of the Working Group on Security reported on the improving military-to-military relationship, including a number of cooperative activities on maritime security, transnational crime, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, peacekeeping, and defense reform/ professionalization. The Working Group noted U.S. support for the continued modernization of the Indonesian military forces and for Indonesia's construction of a Peacekeeping Training Center. The Working Group noted the U.S. and Indonesian co-chairmanship of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) Counter Terrorism Experts Working Group.

Working Group on Energy

The co-chairs of the Working Group on Energy reported on the cooperative activities undertaken since the Energy Policy Dialogue (EPD) in June 2010, including the U.S.-Indonesia Energy Investment Roundtable in May 2011 in Jakarta. The highly successful event identified the key policy issues for improving the investment climate in Indonesia's energy sector and attracting the substantial investment needed for Indonesia to meet its own ambitious production targets for both fossil fuels and renewable energy. The Working Group has already begun cooperating to implement key recommendations from the event, including the July 10-20 Geothermal Power Reverse Trade Mission that the U.S. Trade and Development Agency organized for thirteen Indonesian delegates from the national and provincial government as well as the corporate sector. Additionally, the Working Group is in the preliminary stages of planning a second U.S.-Indonesia Energy Investment Roundtable focused on conventional and unconventional gas to be held this fall. Furthermore, Indonesia and the United States have decided to cooperate on Indonesian efforts to slow the growth of emissions from its energy sector through strategies outlined in Indonesia's climate change sector roadmap, in particular through cooperation on a \$16.2 million Indonesia Clean Energy Development Project that will install 120 MW of clean energy and increase access for 1.2 million Indonesians to clean energy.

Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Natalegawa reaffirmed the importance of the Joint Commission in strengthening the bilateral relationship and offering a strategic vision for enhanced future cooperation. They noted that in addition to regular Joint Commission plenary sessions, the United States and Indonesia are boosting overall senior level dialogue, building relationships between our peoples, and developing institutional relations, not only between governments, but also among civil society, business, and academia. They also underscored cooperation in health, which has made significant progress over the last year, with steps taken to work closely on a variety of health and infectious disease issues. They also highlighted important bilateral science and technology cooperation initiatives.

The two sides plan to hold the next meeting of the Joint Commission in the United States in 2012.

AFRICOM Empowering African Development as Well as Security

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) is building the capacity of partner nations to counter extremist threats, respect civilian control and respond more effectively to humanitarian and security needs across the continent, a senior U.S. Defense Department official told members of Congress.

In testimony before the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Africa July 26, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Vicki Huddleston said AFRICOM, created in October 2008, did not create a competing military force in Africa.

"AFRICOM is on the continent to build the capacity of professional militaries under civilian control," Huddleston said.

Its partnership with 54 African nations is helping those nations to more ably "counter extremism and provide for the security of their citizens and contribute to peacekeeping," she said. Their increased capacity in turn helps them provide "a secure environment for democracy, governance and development."

Nearly three years after the command's launch, many Africans have had a chance to see AFRICOM at work. For example, in October 2009 around 650 military personnel from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and host nation Uganda joined U.S. troops for a two-week exercise named Natural Fire 10. The exercise focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Huddleston said the militaries also worked together to build a school and provided humanitarian aid in a health clinic.

Through such exercises Africans can see how AFRICOM is "helping their military not only to improve their skills but to work with [other] militaries in the region," she said.

Africans also have been able to see AFRICOM's training of the Liberian army and the training of a Democratic Republic of the Congo battalion in Kisangani, which has now been deployed to protect civilians in a region where the Lord's Resistance Army is active, Huddleston said.

"By training professional military units that respect civilian control, these militaries become important contributors to stability and respect for the rule of law," she said, while AFRICOM's exercises "provide opportunities to African partners to continue perfecting their professional abilities."

Huddleston said the training includes international standards on human rights, including respect for the rule of law, tolerance and women's rights.

Sharon Cromer, the senior deputy assistant administrator for Africa at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), told the congressional hearing that AFRICOM's efforts to build security, stability and peace are essential to creating an environment conducive to economic growth, poverty reduction and development.

Economic development needs "a professional military that respects human rights and respects good governance and democracy," she said.

"We really cannot proceed with our development intervention in good measure if we don't have peace and security. So what AFRICOM has done on the continent to enhance the professionalism of militaries and support human rights and good governance is absolutely essential to what we do in development," Cromer said.

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